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# homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE

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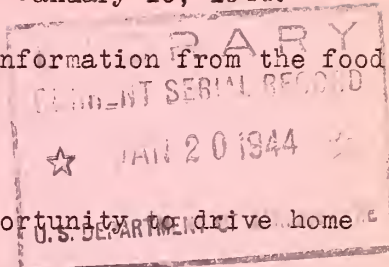
Subject: "PREVENTING WASTE IN SERVING SCHOOL LUNCHES." Information from the food distribution officials of the War Food Administration.

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The lunch served at school offers an excellent opportunity to drive home some of the wartime lessons in preventing food waste. The food distribution officials of the War Food Administration point out that the same general practices that prevent waste in any household apply to preparing foods on a larger scale at school. Don't let food spoil by careless storage. Don't throw away any leftovers that could be eaten. Don't serve over-large portions. And avoid "invisible waste"---the loss of food values due to poor cooking methods and careless handling.

The mothers or teachers or older girls who prepare the lunch at school can set a good example of thrifty preparation and serving. They can also show children how conserving food enables us to send more food to hungry children in other countries. Any grade school child can see that when nothing goes to waste, you don't have to buy as many food materials to make up meals. More is left in stores and storehouses for others to use. And when the cost of food is held down by careful management, the parents who sponsor the school lunches have more money left for war savings or other ways of helping the war.

When food spoils because it is not stored properly, you can see exactly how much is wasted--- wilted vegetables, eggs that didn't stay fresh, moldy bread. That's visible waste. Food spoiled by burning---burnt toast or scorched milk---is also visible waste. Thick potato peelings or other vegetable or fruit parings are waste you can see. The school lunchroom workers can save fat trimmings and drippings just as the woman at home does, and use them in cooking. If all the fat can't be used, they can take it to the butcher to help make explosives.





The lunchroom can use almost any edible odds and ends of food leftover in saucepans or serving dishes if the leftovers are properly stored. If the school has a cafeteria service leftover vegetables can be creamed separately and offered on the menu until all have been taken. Several kinds of vegetables can be combined in soups and salads, or put into stews, hashes, deep dish meat pies or meat and vegetable loaves. Some leftover vegetables, and, of course, leftover meats, make good sandwich fillings.

Plate leavings are another very visible waste. They are generally due to serving too large portions. Sometimes the children do not like the way the food is prepared---it may be scorched, or greasy, or overcooked or too highly seasoned. Children who have "eyes bigger than their appetites" need to be taught to take only what they can eat. Sometimes a sign above the lunch counter will help correct this tendency to large unwanted servings.

The school lunchroom also has its share of invisible waste --the loss of food values, particularly vitamins and minerals--that occurs because the food is exposed to one of its three "enemies"---air, heat, or water.

Protect fruits and vegetables from air by serving or cooking them unpeeled whenever you can. Let the children eat the skins of bright colored fruits like apples. Of course you should wash the fruit first. Wash and cut up tender squash without peeling it, then steam it. Cook potatoes in their "jackets"---either baked or boiled. After you shred or cut vegetables and fruits into pieces for cooking, don't let them stand long, or they'll lose vitamins. If you can't avoid holding cut or raw vegetables or vegetables or fruits for a short time, cover them and keep them in a cold place to protect them from the air. Plan to serve raw foods often to offset some of the unavoidable losses of vitamins, but don't prepare them any sooner than you have to.

Heat is another cause of lost food value. Too much heat damages foods in



several ways. For example, high temperatures toughen eggs, cheese and meat, and makes these foods harder to digest. Overcooking vegetables destroys vitamins and often makes the vegetables an unattractive color. White vegetables like potatoes, turnips, cabbage and onions turn gray from overcooking. It is harder to keep food hot without loss until 25 or 50 children are served than to serve the same kind of food to 5 or 6 people in a family. If you have to hold cooked vegetables for late comers, take them off the stove, cool them quickly and reheat them a short time. Burned or scorched food is not only a loss in itself, but may start a lifelong prejudice against that food. To avoid scorching sauces or dishes cooked with milk, cook them in a double boiler. If you haven't a double boiler, put the pan on a rack in a larger pan containing water.

Water, too is a cause of "invisible waste" in the school lunch room as well as in the home. Don't soak fresh fruits and vegetables before you cook them. You need to soak dry beans and dried fruit, but after you have soaked them long enough, cook them in the same water so as not to lose food values. Use very little water in cooking any vegetables or fruits. For example, you don't need to add any water when you cook spinach. The water that clings to the leaves is enough. And of course you won't waste the cooking liquid from vegetables, because it's good to serve with the vegetables or to put into soups and sauces.

Here are a few other good rules for preventing invisible waste in the school lunchroom.

Cook pared fruits and vegetables whole or in large pieces so there will be the smallest amount of cut surface. Cook in the least possible amount of water and for the shortest possible length of time that will get the food "done." Don't stir any more than necessary. Don't add soda. When you prepare meat and vegetable combinations, add the vegetables when the meat is almost done, so they won't be overcooked. Cook vegetables in boiling salted water to cut down cooking time.

